

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 4, and claim 4 has been cancelled. Remaining for the Examiner's further consideration are amended claim 1 and claims 2, 3 and 5.

Claim 1 was rejected as being anticipated by Lazzarotti or Gretener et al. with the statement that "both references teach (1) measuring a void on the main conveyor, (2) checking the availability of an equal or less sized article on the feed paths and (3) timely feeding any appropriately sized article into the void on the main path."

Claim 1 has been amended to add the limitations of claim 4 to the effect that "when the articles have been cut out from each auxiliary conveyance path for joining, a spacing is created on said auxiliary conveyance path prior to next carrying in of articles."

Lazzarotti discloses an apparatus for feeding mail flats to a reserved allocated space on the main path from a loading site.

Gretener et al. discloses that corresponding with the movement of a tray (vacant space) on the main path driven at a constant speed, and without stopping but by accelerating or decelerating the speed of the call-up conveyor forming the auxiliary path, parceled goods on the auxiliary path are transferred into the tray for joining.

Applicant's amended claim 1 which refers to the fact that when articles have been cut out from each auxiliary conveyance path for joining, a spacing is created on the auxiliary conveyance path prior to the next carrying in of articles. These further limitations in claim 1 are believed to clearly and patentably

distinguish the invention from either Lazzarotti or Gretener et al. or any combination thereof since neither of such references disclose the added limitations.

The specification has been amended in the summary of the invention to reflect the amendment of claim 1.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1 and further distinguishes from the references by pointing out that when it is confirmed that articles are stored at a position in close proximity to a junction with the main conveyor path, each auxiliary conveyance path reserves a detected spacing, and when this reserve spacing approaches the junction, the articles are cut out from the auxiliary conveyance path for joining to the spacing.


Claim 3 is dependent upon claim 2 and states that when the articles stored in the auxiliary conveyance path cannot be cut out all at once to the reserved spacing, the auxiliary conveyance path is given priority over the other auxiliary conveyance paths in reserving a spacing for cutting out the remaining articles in the auxiliary conveyance path, thus further distinguishing from the references.

Claim 5 is dependent upon claim 1 and states that the spacing equal to or greater than a predetermined length is a spacing equal to a spacing preset between the groups of articles in a before-and-behind relation plus a minimum length of the stored article, thus further distinguishing from the references.

In view of the foregoing, this application is believed now to be in condition for allowance and such action is most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

REISING, ETHINGTON,
BARNES, KISSELLE, P.C.



William H. Griffith
Registration No. 16,076
P.O. Box 4390
Troy, Michigan 48099
Phone: (248) 689-3500
Fax: (248) 689-4071

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